

## Chapter 4 by David Hutchison

Lord Gwyn looks at Guinevere smiling on Nick's mobile phone.

“I thought that she had vanished. Now she appears on this human's magical device. We will go at once to Ynys Witrin.”

Josh whispers to Nick, “Ynys Witrin, The Isle of Glass.”

Lord Gwyn brings a gold-tipped horn from a fold in his cloak.

“I call the Hounds of Annwn.”

He blows on the horn. Although no sound seems to come forth everyone is listening, straining his or her ears. Numerous tunnels lead off from the stone hall. A faint smell of mint and blood wafts from the tunnel directly behind Lord Gwyn. The sounds of many padded paws and

baying echoes down the tunnel. The sounds and smells get stronger as torches cast ominous shadows on the walls. A pack of huge slobbering hounds come rushing forth down the tunnel.

Josh gasps, “The Wild Hunt.”

The pack of gigantic white hounds as big as pit ponies spew into the stone hall. They have red-tipped ears above haunted brown eyes with strong jaws full of wickedly sharp teeth. Wailing and howling, they circle the stone hall causing a whirlwind to build up. The torches flare up and flicker, reflecting silver collars around their necks.

Lord Gwyn raises his hands and the hounds slow down and stop.

“Atterdag, Bargest, Fionn!”

Three of the gigantic hounds wander into the centre and sit down in front of Lena, Nick and Josh.

“Aurelius, Herne!”

Two more hounds come into the centre. One sits beside Dag and the other comes up to Lord Gwyn.

“Aurelius.”

The great hound sits down. Lord Gwyn sits astride the hound and holds onto its collar.

“Up!”

Aurelius gets up on all fours. Dag sits astride his hound. Lena sits on Bargest’s back, grabs onto the silver collar and says, “Up!”

Bargest rises.

“Easy,” says Lena to Nick and Josh.

“Come humans mount! They will not bite unless I command it!” says Lord Gwyn.

Nick shrugs at Josh. They each mount a hound and hold onto the silver collars yelling, “Up!”

The hounds lurch up. Lord Gwyn leads the pack off down a stone tunnel to the left. At first there is plenty of light from torches along the walls but soon they start to thin out. Some Punkies fly in front lighting the way. Occasionally the tunnel opens up into long courtyards lined with more tunnels and as they rush past there are glimpses of numerous empty halls. The place is like a labyrinth.

After ages of twisting and turning, the pack starts to slow down. The tunnel opens out into a cathedral-like cavern, coated in pale-green luminescence. They are standing on a shore of a dark underground lake. A small island glistens like moss in diamonds in the centre of the lake.

Lord Gwyn says, “Ynys Witrin.”

“It’s beautiful,” says Lena.

The humans get their feet wet up to their knees as they cross on their swimming hounds. Nick notices pale, blurred creatures flitting around under the water. Something with sharp glinting teeth rushes past and Dag's hound gives a yelp. Luckily they are almost at the island and the hound reaches the shore. Dag jumps off and he and Lord Gwyn help the wailing hound out of the water onto the glittering beach. Its hind legs are mauled. The dog peers up at its master with woeful eyes, lets off a bloodcurdling howl and dies.

“Loyal Aurelius, I will bring you back shortly,” sighs Lord Gwyn. The other hounds gather in a circle around Aurelius and let out a chorus of howls.

Nick asks Dag, “What was in the lake?”

Dag shakes his head. He follows Lord Gwyn heading up the sloping hill on a winding path

## Chapter 4 by David Hutchison

covered in dark green moss that meanders amongst glistening lumps of glass. Lena stops and touches a glass lump.

Lena says, “It’s soft. Like that grow gel stuff.”

On the top of the slope there is a strange bush. An ornately carved stick is rooted into the ground. Thorny branches springing off it are covered in white sweet-smelling blossom.

“Behold the Glastonbury Thorn,” says Lord Gwyn.

“So that’s not the cause then,” says Nick, sitting down.

Lord Gwyn gathers some thorn flowers in his hand. Lena takes a photo of the bush with her mobile phone. The phone blinks out making a screeching sound. A face of a Punkie peers up on the screen. She smiles at Lena.

“Another Punkie in a phone,” says Josh.

“I’ve a thought,” says Nick. “Phone me!”

“What?” says Josh.

“Just try it!” says Nick.

Josh taps in Nick’s number.

“No network,” says Josh.

“Take a photo of me!” says Nick.

Josh holds out his phone and takes a photo of Nick. Suddenly there is a screeching noise. A Punkie guide is sucked into the phone. Josh drops it onto the moss. Staring up on the screen is a girl with pale skin and sad hollow eyes. She tries to speak.

“No good good good.”

Nick says, “The phones trap the Punkies!”

Guinevere speaks up, “Yes, yes, yes.”

Lena says, “Our mobile phones are hurting them?”

Guinevere says, “No. No. Good. More.”

## Chapter 4 by David Hutchison

Lena says, “Could the Punkies be drawn to them. Addicted?”

Nick says, “Microwave energy or rare metal elements in the phone combined with its camera function?”

Josh says, “Is there a link with the Punkies and the dead patches?”

Lord Gwyn raises a bushy eyebrow. “I don’t know of the energies that you speak of but my Bog Fairies are the souls of the marshes. Offshoots of the Glastonbury Thorn.”

He continues, “If a Bog Fairy were to uproot, then all the plants would be full of sorrow. They would starve and wilt, and the earth would die.”

“Nick, can you find the positions of mobile phone masts around Sedgemoor?” says Lena.

“Get me back to my laptop and I’ll check it out,” replies Nick.

“Lord Gwyn, can you show me on a map where your Bog Fairies are vanishing?” asks Lena.

Lord Gwyn nods.

Nick brings out a map and gives him a pencil. Lord Gwyn slowly draws a series of circles on the map.

Lena says, “We must get to a computer.”

They walk back down the mossy path. Lord Gwyn bends over Aurelius and scatters thorn flowers over its ruined legs. The hound awakens and its legs start to heal.

Lord Gwyn says, “Show the humans the quickest path. Take Herne. I will wait for Aurelius to recover.”

Dag nods and mounts Herne. He beckons the others to follow him. They go around the island to the far side. They cross the lake without incident and reach another tunnel. With the Punkies

lighting the way, they travel up and up in a spiral for ages. Finally they reach a set of stone steps. Dag dismounts and the rest follow suit.

“Home!” says Dag. The hounds turn and howl as they race off back down the tunnel. The Punky guides hover and spin around, as Lena, Nick and Josh hold up their mobiles letting them blow kisses and farewells to the Punkies trapped in the mobiles, then they too rush down after the pack.

Using the lights of their mobiles, they manage to see their way up the tunnel. The tunnel gets narrower and the sides become covered in gnarled roots. They enter a small chamber with an iron ladder leading up into the dark.

Dag climbs up the ladder and opens a hatch. A shaft of light appears.

“Come on!” Dag shouts down.

Lena, Nick and Josh climb up the ladder, through the hatch into a dimly lit concrete bunker. Light is emitted from dials and other engineering instruments. Dag continues up another steel ladder and pushes open a manhole cover.

Lena gasps, “I can see the stars.”

They come up through the manhole into a glade surrounded by yew trees. Glastonbury Tor is lit up in the moonlight above them.

“What an experience that was,” says Josh.

“I feel like I’ve woken from a dream,” says Lena.

“It was no dream,” says Nick. “Look, I’ve brought proof.”

Nick takes several small white flowers from his pocket and the sweet smell fills the air.

**Chapter 4** by David Hutchison

Dag is horrified and knocks the flowers out of Nick's hand. "Don't you realise what you've done?"